The AIR FORCES of the WORLD

Caption: PAKISTAN AIR FORCE in 1950s

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& JOHN FRICKER

THE PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

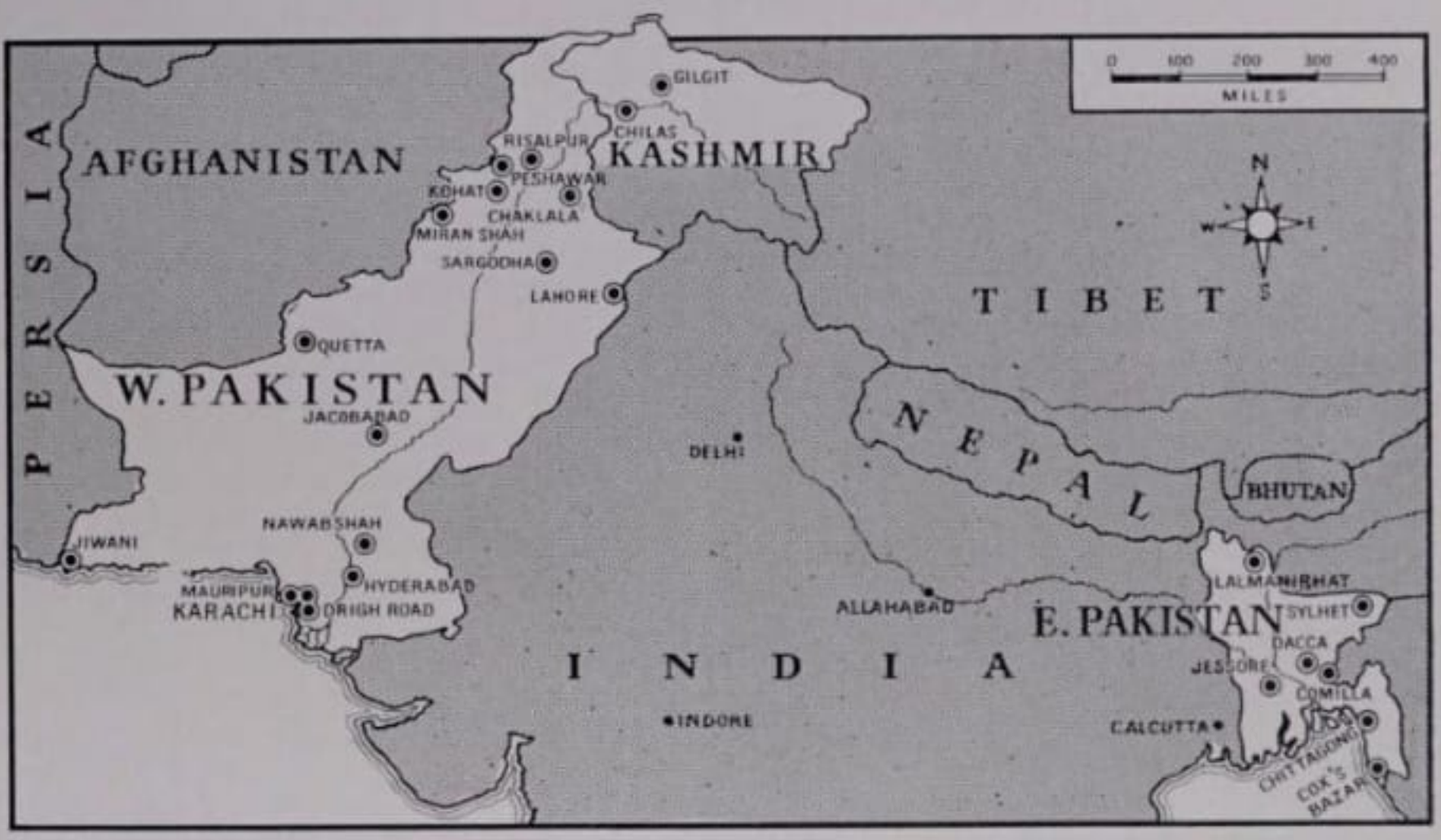
H.Q.—Mauripur, Karachi.

C.-in-C.—Air Vice-Marshal M. Asghar Khan.

When India was partitioned in July 1947 and the Dominion of Pakistan was formally constituted, two of the ten squadrons in the RIAF were assigned as a basis for the newly formed Royal Pakistan Air Force, together with 44 pilots, 2,000 airmen, about 200 officers, and a handful of unserviceable Hawker Tempest fighters and Douglas Dakota transports, and technical and material assistance was furnished by the RAF. An Air Commander for the Pakistan Forces was provided by the latter service from the inception of the RPAF, when Air Vice-Marshal A. Perry Keene supervised the initial establishment and organisation until the appointment of the first Pakistan C.-in-C. Many Pakistani flying and ground personnel were former members of the Royal Indian Air Force, and provided a nucleus of experience and instructional potential, while a large number of RAF officers and other ranks were initially responsible for filling key positions. Now, however, there are only three RAF personnel assisting the PAF, in a technical capacity.

One of the first moves was to establish a systematic training organisation, and a flying training school was set up at Risalpur, which was eventually to become a full-scale Flying College on the lines of the RAF College, Cranwell. Initially, training for permanent officers during a three-year course began on a dozen or so de Havilland Tiger Moths and continued on 24 North American Harvards, to qualification standard, but the RPAF later changed to the "all-through" system on Harvards alone. Pakistan pilots, together with ground personnel, have also trained in the U.K., Australia, Germany and the U.S.A.

Following a long-term plan for recruiting, instituted in 1949–50 by Air Marshal Sir Richard Atcherley, RAF, then C.-in-C., pre-selection of suitable personnel was undertaken at RPAF public schools, and University Air Squadrons were also organised, with Tiger Moths and Auster Aiglet Trainers, to encourage recruiting of academically qualified Pakistanis. Technical training was catered for by an Apprentices College at Korangi Creek, and a technical school was opened at Drigh Road, which is the main maintenance depot of the Pakistan Air Force. Among the first operational equipment of the RPAF was a number of Hawker Tempest F.B.2s, which equipped the three squadrons (Nos. 5, 9 and 14) of a Fighter-Bomber Wing at Peshawar, Lahore and Miranshah, and a squadron of Handley Page Halifax 9 bombers. Transport support was provided by a quantity of war-surplus Douglas C-47s, which equipped a transport squadron at Lahore, while a communications squadron at Mauripur was originally composed of a variety of types, including Auster A.O.P.5s, two Harvards, one Vickers Viking for V.I.P. transport, together with a similarly furnished C.47, and two D.H. Devons. A Vickers Viscount has since taken over the job of V.I.P. flying in Pakistan and has joined the strength



No fewer than 62 Bristol Type 170 Mk. 21 and 31 transports were purchased for PAF use between East and West Pakistan.

The North American T-6G Texan, seen flying over the rugged terrain of N. Kashmir, is the PAF's standard basic trainer.

of No. 12 Squadron, which operates from Mauripur on transport, reconnaissance and other duties, mainly with Bristol Freighters.

In 1950 Hawker Fury F.B.60s began to replace the Tempests in the RPAF fighter-bomber squadrons, being flown out to Karachi from the United Kingdom, and included in the order were two two-seat Fury T.61s for dual conversion. The Tempests, to which pilots converted straight from the Harvard, were retained for operational training, and were then stored until disposed of in 1958. One squadron (No. 9) remains equipped with Hawker Furies, and is based at Kohat, near the Afghan border, but is due for new aircraft by early 1959.

Another major re-equipment phase was the purchase of 62 Bristol Type 170 Mk.21 and 31 transports from Britain. Pakistan, being divided into two halves, separated by the width of India and faced with the additional problem of the air defence of wild country on the North-West Frontier, has a particularly difficult air logistics problem, which the fleet of Freighters was to solve. They have additional value in being able to carry a useful load of bombs if ever required for use in tribal disturbances, and have also been used for many other purposes in Pakistan including supply dropping, maritime reconnaissance, air/sea rescue and navigational training. The first Bristol 170s arrived from Britain in 1949, one of them bringing two de Havilland Tiger Moths in its capacious fuselage, while another was adapted for use by the Prime Minister, with quickly detachable chairs. Freighters of No. 6 (Transport) Squadron, operating on detachment from Chaklala, have been responsible for the air supply of snowbound villages in N. Kashmir for nearly 10 years, flying through the Indus Valley in the Western Himalayas. During that time, which includes a spell of one year of night operations, there has been only one fatal accident to a "Valley Flight" Freighter. The PAF accident rate for 1957 of 0.4 fatalities per 100,000 hr. is claimed to be less than recent figures for the Royal Air Force.

For its first jet fighters Pakistan looked once more to Britain, and in 1950 placed an order for 36 Vickers Attacker F.B.2s. Although designed primarily as a ship-borne machine, the Attacker was also produced in a land version, offering the nautical advantages of short take-off and landing characteristics, with a heavy load of cannon, bombs and rockets. The Attackers were flown out over the next three years, and enabled the RPAF to organise its flying and maintenance on a jet basis.

Although based on comparatively few permanent stations the RPAF had a selection of about 80 disused landing grounds, built during World War II, many of which had 2,000-yard runways of concrete, asphalt or brick. These enable most of E. and W. Pakistan to be accessible by air, but there are many areas, like the N.W. Frontier Province, where only the Austers can land. In addition to the principal bases at Mauripur, which houses the Air H.Q. and No. 12 (Composite) Squadron, and Drigh Road, Peshawar,

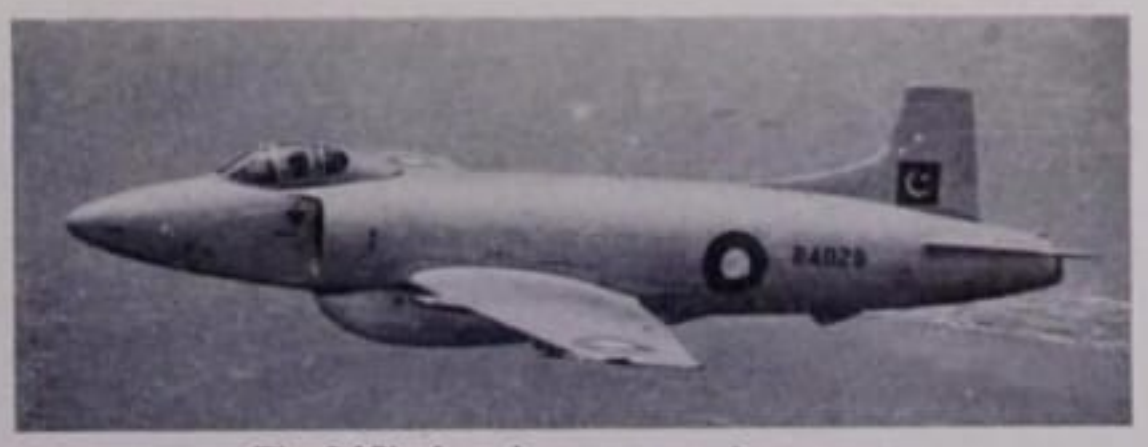
As a member of SEATO, Pakistan has received a substantial number of F-86F Sabre interceptors.

Lahore, Kohat, Risalpur and Sargodha, there is a forward maintenance unit and base at Chaklala, in Rawalpindi. During 1957–58 most of these airfields have been extended, with American assistance, to nearly 3,000 yds. for the operation of jet aircraft.

Following a defence pact with the U.S.A. in May 1954, and the formation of SEATO, Pakistan began to receive American military aid, which for the RPAF consisted of jet fighter-bombers and advanced jet trainers. The first batch of a large number of North American F-86F Sabres was shipped to Pakistan towards the end of 1956, together with some Lockheed T-33A jet trainers. This equipment was accompanied by American technicians and instructional personnel to assist in the programme of conversion, and a number of RPAF pilots and ground crew were sent to the U.S. for training. Earlier in 1956 Pakistan became a Republic within the British Commonwealth, and the RPAF therefore dropped its "Royal" prefix.

With its new Sabre squadrons at an advanced stage of operational readiness, the PAF is now well equipped to meet its defence commitments, but being organised on purely a defensive basis, within the Baghdad and SEATO Pacts, it was lacking in tactical bomber equipment. It is now organised into two Groups: No. 1, with H.Q. at Peshawar, under Air Cdre. Nur Khan, controls all the operational and flying units in the PAF, while No. 2 Group, administered from Drigh Road, under Air Cdre. Akghar, looks after maintenance and ground organisations.

First-line aircraft strength of the PAF is probably well over 100, including several Lockheed RT-33 tactical reconnaissance aircraft, and the total personnel about 15,000. The PAF has shown some interest in procuring a light jet bomber, and will probably be supplied with some Martin B-57 Canberras during the course of 1958. It is also anxious to procure a suitable basic jet trainer, and has evaluated both the Hunting Jet Provost and the Air-Fouga Magister.



The PAF's Attackers are now in storage.

No. 12 Squadron possesses one Vickers Viscount.

A Hawker Fury T.T.60 at Mauripur.

A Hawker Fury T.61 trainer at Kohat.

CURRENT EQUIPMENT

Fighter-Bombers	North American F-86F Sabre, Hawker Fury F.B.60.
Transports	Bristol Type 170 21M and 31; de Havilland Devon, Vickers Viking, Vickers Viscount.
Trainers	North American T-6G Texan, Hawker Fury T.61, Lockheed T-33A.
Miscellaneous	Auster A.O.P.6, Auster Aiglet trainer, de Havilland Tiger Moth, Grumman SA-16A, Lockheed RT-33A, Sikorsky H-19A, Vickers Attacker F.B.2. (stored).

The Pakistan Air Force has received a substantial number of Lockheed T-33A trainers since the end of 1956.